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Ex-Spy Returns To B. U.

BOSTON, Nov. 26 (AP) — Dick Fecteau is back home at Boston University, and the discipline he learned on the football field three decades ago helped get him there.

"I like working with athletes. They're so much more serious and disciplined than other people," says Fecteau, 51, an assistant athletic director at his alma mater.

Discipline means a lot to the soft-spoken Fecteau. He endured 19 years of it as an imprisoned United States spy in China.

Fecteau was an international name seven years ago this month when he was released by the Chinese after nearly 20 years in lockup, nine in solitary confinement.

Fecteau and a colleague, John Downey, were shot down over China and captured on Nov. 29, 1952. With his mother seriously ill in Lynn, Mass., Fecteau was released Dec. 13, 1971.

A football guard for the Boston University Terriers, Fecteau played on solid teams led by a star quarterback, Harry Agganis. Another teammate, John Simpson, is now the Boston University athletic director.

Three years after Fecteau was released by the Chinese, Simpson hired him as an athletic aide whose low-profile chores require dealing with the National Collegiate Athletic Association on rules and regulations.

Fecteau still lives in Lynn, not far from the neighborhood where he grew up with the late Agganis, a local legend who played professional baseball for the Boston Red Sox before being struck down in 1955 by a massive pulmonary embolism.

After Fecteau's release, it took time for him to adjust to the new world.

"I mapped out a program for him to work September to June," says Simpson, his former teammate. "I know he needs time for himself because he's missed so much."

Simpson adds, "I'm a good guy, but I'd never hire a friend just because he's a friend. Dick's training with the C.I.A. made him perfect for our administrative detail-type work, and he had gotten involved with alumni relations and fund-raising for B.U. on his own, before he was hired."

The athletic director also says that Fecteau is helping Boston University rebuild its athletic programs simply because his name is known as a former Terrier athlete who has returned to the fold.

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